

Helping your village to develop a Community Café



What is the purpose of this leaflet?

We know how vitally important community life is in a village. With this in mind, **the Western Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership rural issues group is keen to help villages to develop community cafés.**

If you have an idea for your Community Café and would like further advice and information, please get in touch!

 01284 757109

 rural@stedsb.gov.uk



What are community Cafés?

Cafés are perfect ways for villages to increase their community life by enabling people to meet regularly for a cup of coffee, cake and a chat!

What types of Community Café are there?

There are many possibilities. You could...

- ◆ have a café in a community centre, village hall, shop, library, or even a school;
- ◆ offer tea, coffee and squash, or provide biscuits and cake, or even a small lunch too;
- ◆ combine a café with internet provision;
- ◆ have a café dedicated to a specific age group;
- ◆ combine a café with a regular event—e.g. bingo or a toddler group; or
- ◆ use volunteers or raise money to pay for a permanent member of staff.

In others words, you can make it as simple or as ambitious as you wish!

Look inside for two excellent case studies...

The WSLSP rural issues group visited two community cafés—**Needham Market Internet Café** and **Noah's House, a community café in Kedington.**

We wanted to find out about the thinking behind these cafés.

We also wanted to gather information that might be useful to others wanting to start a café.

Case study no. 1 — Needham Market Internet Café

Tom Barker, Managing Director: 01449 722660

Facts:

- The vision was to create a free place for people to be.
- Overall project cost: £30,000 (but started off with about £15,000).
- Internet café shares a building with the youth centre.
- Users are from age 9 plus, but core users are 10 to 20 year olds.



What's good about an internet café?

- Very good for informal education.
- Allows education to be self-directed.
- Opportunity for children to socialise in a safe environment.
- Proven to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Can build confidence of users.
- Very satisfying for volunteers.



Major turning points:

- Ideas presented to the Town Council.
- Public meeting took place asking people to get involved.
- Steering group formed.
- Became a Community Interest Company.
- Questionnaires sent to schools in the area.
- Lottery bid for £250,000 over 3 years, towards staff and building improvements, was unsuccessful.
- Fresh brainstorming—project to be community and voluntary-based.
- Successful grants from district and county council, Needham Market and Barking Welfare Charities and the Kerrison Trust, among others.
- Internet Café opened on 24 September 2007.
- Successfully applied for £10,000 from the Youth Opportunities Fund for equipment for a gaming room. Also received donated equipment.
- Successfully applied for £1,000 from the Youth Opportunities Fund for a recording studio.

Issues you may face:

- There are things you must do (e.g. CRB checks for volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults).
- You always need to look for more volunteers.
- Obtaining funding can be a very long and difficult process.
- Other organisations you work with will have their own priorities.
- Sometimes help is offered but it is not always forthcoming.
- There is potential disappointment.
- Hard work and commitment is needed.
- Funders often expect to see invoices before giving you your grant (may cause problems with cash flow).

Top tips!

- Involve local residents with useful skills as this will save a lot of money.
- Fix computer screens so that they are visible to staff/volunteers (blocking sites does not always work).
- One size does not fit all; you need to see what works well in your village.
- Involve users in decision-making — this will increase feelings of ownership and respect for the Premises.
- Always look for other ways to get an income (e.g. hiring out the internet café for events).

Case study No. 2—Kedington Community Café – Noah's House

Helen Donoghue, Organiser: 01440 762843

Major turning points:

- Group of Christians got together because they wanted to do something for their community.
- Survey carried out asking people what they would like to see at the café.
- Started in May 2004 – open every Thursday afternoon.
- Received a donation of £1,433 from a resident and a grant from Suffolk County Council for kettles, etc.
- Another survey carried out to see if extension of opening hours was appropriate.
- Started a close relationship with, and became a branch of, Kedington Community Association - led to free venue hire, and now the café gives the KCA donations.
- Gradually built up client numbers and opened from 10:30am to 4:30pm every Thursday from July 2008.
- Started offering a hot lunch which is made externally and provided at cost price (they currently cater for about 9 people).

Issues you may face:

- All volunteers must have the correct health and safety training.
- You must have enough volunteers to cover the rota at all times.
- Unless you do the baking yourself, you will need to find volunteers; if you pay them for their ingredients they are more likely to help again.

Facts:

- 'Noah' is Hebrew for comfort and rest.
- Noah's House mission statement:

"Friendship, counsel and care – through hospitality".

What's good about a community café?

- Encourages social development.
- Encourages social cohesion.
- Satisfying for volunteers.
- A café is open to anyone, unlike a club which is for members.



Top tips!

- Your local venue may already have a lot of the equipment needed.
- Promote yourselves through your local magazine.
- Arrange tables in a way that encourages people to mingle.
- Encourage activities (e.g. art displays, children's toys).
- Allow enough time and volunteers to set up the café.
- Always listen to people's suggestions for improvements.
- If you are an individual wanting to start a café, form a committee to support and supervise you.
- Keep the café opening hours consistent.
- Don't worry if it starts off very slowly; people will tell their friends!
- Encourage lots of volunteers to join the team. They also act as advertisers for the café.





What organisations can help with funding?

There are grants available from your district/borough council. Their contact details are below:

- **Babergh:** 01473 825872
www.babergh-south-suffolk.gov.uk/Babergh/Home/Community+-+people+-+living/Community+Grants/
- **Forest Heath:** 01638 719257
www.forest-heath.gov.uk/Community/Community+Development/871+Community+Grants.htm
- **St Edmundsbury:** 01284 757109
www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/racif.cfm



Useful contacts:

For initial enquiries, contact the WSLSP rural issues group on: 01284 757109 or rural@stedsbcc.gov.uk

Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre: www.bsevc.cswebsites.org/; 01284 766126

Charity Commission: www.charity-commission.gov.uk/; 0845 3000 218

Community Interest Companies: www.cicregulator.gov.uk/; 029 2034 6228

Extended Schools: www.suffolk.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/Schools/ExtendedServices/; 01473 264289

Forest Heath Volunteer Centre: www.thevoluntarynetwork.org/; 01638 608048

Good Neighbour Scheme: www.suffolkacre.org.uk/; 01473 242538

Haverhill Volunteer Centre: www.hvc.org.uk/; 01440 708444

Suffolk Volunteering Federation: www.voluteeringsuffolk.org/; 01638 602711



Community Café not for you? In which case why not think about attending or hosting a Food 'n' Friends Club?

These clubs normally meet in a volunteer's home for a mini lunch or tea and cake.

For more information, please contact Gavin Hodge of Age Concern on: 01473 298686, 07500 770523, or gavin.hodge@ageconcernsuffolk.org.uk

**This leaflet has been produced by the WSLSP Rural Issues group
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